



Coaching, Evaluating and Delivering Constructive Feedback

Topic Twelve – Responding to Resistance Job Aid

Follow the recommendations below to effectively respond to resistance:

Use questioning to dig deeper: Explore why the employee feels the way he or she does by asking open-ended questions, e.g. “what are you feeling”, “tell me more about why you feel that way”, “describe/explain exactly what your issue is.”

Resist the urge to fill empty space: Let the employee use long pauses to reflect, reconsider, and elaborate on what he or she has said. Encourage staff to continue speaking using simple verbal cues, such as “uh-huh” or “go on.”

Confirm your understanding: Before attempting to address the resistance, ensure that you actually understand the situation by summarizing your understanding and explicitly asking if you’ve understood correctly.

Identify the kind of resistance you have received, and respond accordingly:

If the employee is disagreeing with your characterization of what has happened, consider the possibility that your interpretation is based on judgments rather than objective facts. Rebuild your understanding of the situation by incorporating elements of the employee’s position and by offering more details of which the employee may not be familiar or aware. “So, here’s what happened...is that right?”

If the employee blames others for what happened or won’t take responsibility, focus the conversation on those elements over which the employee *does* have control and those elements with which you can assist. “I understand that this kind of situation arises. Could you...?”

If the employee does not acknowledge the significance of the issue, ask the employee questions about the relationship between their actions and the consequences you’ve already described (in the *Reason step of the EARN feedback process, Topic V of the Coaching series*). “If you approach your coworker in that way, then how might we expect him or her to react?”

Address any resistance that exists within yourself: As a manager, you’re expected to model appropriate behavior. However, it’s human to feel resistant in certain situations. Imagine you and your staff haven’t always seen eye to eye. It can be incredibly difficult to rise above your own resistance to the situation and do the right thing. Be aware of what you’re thinking and feeling, and be prepared to leave your comfort zone. Remember you can seek guidance from your colleagues and mentors to help you address these sorts of situations.

Define and confirm an action plan: Once you and the employee agree on the issues to be addressed, ask the employee for suggestions on actions he or she can take to avoid the same situation in the future or to build his or her skills to better handle the situation. “How do you suggest we move forward from here?” Be

prepared to offer your own recommendations, but when doing so, build from the employee's suggestions to build buy-in for the action plan. When you are done, summarize and confirm the next steps you have discussed.

Follow up: Defining an action plan does not end the response to resistance. As a manager, it is your responsibility to actively follow up with your staff. After a coaching or feedback conversation, always plan next steps to build on what you have discussed and to confirm that your coaching has the intended impact.